

GOSHEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes September 7, 2016 meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Anders Nygren called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:

Anders Nygren, Gene Newell, Jason Masi, Chris Marino, Paul Gallo, Iain Kinsella. Guests: Barry Donaldson, Goshen Land Trust; Robert Valentine, First Selectman, Town of Goshen.

APPROVAL of Minutes:

The minutes of the August 3, 2016 meeting were presented for approval. Iain Kinsella made a motion to accept the minutes, motion seconded by Gene Newell, there was no discussion and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Anders Nygren reviewed his discussion of the possibility of overnight camping on town property with Marty Connor, who indicated that Torrington Area Board of Health District requires well and septic facilities for camping to be allowed. Robert Valentine voiced his opinion that he didn't think that sounded correct and volunteered to check with T.A. Board of Health and will advise back. Barry Donaldson discussed the Goshen Land Trust camping permit policy; First Selectman Valentine agreed that a permit to camp, and required campsite cleanup sounded good. Barry Donaldson agreed to provide GLT policy to the Conservation Commission for our review.

Anders Nygren introduced First Selectman Valentine and asked that he initiate the discussion on land purchase. Robert Valentine handed out a Town of Goshen GIS map showing Goshen Land Trust parcel, Goshen Wildlife Management parcel, and a 60 acre parcel of land belonging to Catherine Harmon on North Goshen Rd. There is an opportunity for the Town to acquire the 60 acre Harmon parcel, pending successful negotiation, and create a hiking trail through GLT Mountain View property, extending through the Harmon property. Title 67 Land Acquisition Fund balance is currently at approximately \$500,000.00, which could partly or wholly be used for this land acquisition. Barry Donaldson offered that he heard the State of CT would be offering grant monies in the near future for purchase of open space land. He stated that there is typically a 3 month window to apply, have a survey initiated, and two appraisals done.

Robert Valentine asked if the Goshen Conservation Commission would be in favor of initiating this land purchase. The first step to move forward on this matter would be to approach the Board of Finance for their consideration. Funds must be appropriated before anything can be done further. He asked if it would make sense to modify Title 67 to allow the Goshen Land Trust to be able to make proposals for land acquisition. Currently, only groups that serve a public function are able to make a proposal to the Town to use funds in this account (e.g. Goshen Conservation Commission, Goshen Recreation Commission).

Iain Kinsella asked Barry Donaldson what the grant structure from the State of CT might be. Barry answered that the Land Trust has been awarded 50% in the past, but up to 65% of agreed purchase price could be awarded. Barry suggested that the Conservation Commission might apply for 65% of the purchase price. No offer has yet been made to the current property owner.

Robert Valentine offered that a joint venture with the Goshen Conservation Commission and Goshen Land Trust would be a very good scenario, allowing GCC to make a proposal to access Title 67 funds and GLT would be responsible for land stewardship over time.

Jason Masi asked if this proposed purchase initiation of Harmon land is in line with GCC charter of acquiring and preserving land for permanent open space. Anders Nygren answered that it is in line with the Commission's charter, to accumulate small parcels of land into larger open space sections, and for that reason makes sense for GCC to pursue this purchase initiation.

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Chris Marino asked if the Goshen Land Trust were to dissolve, what would become of their land holdings? Barry Donaldson answered that the land would revert to another land trust entity, or another 501c3 non-profit agency similar to a land trust, or revert to the Town. Barry also indicated that their Charter already addresses the question of property ownership post-Goshen Land Trust dissolution.

Anders Nygren asked for first steps moving forward on land acquisition. Gene Newell answered that he felt the GLT is more experienced in applying for grants, and might potentially get a larger grant, ultimately saving the Town of Goshen money. Iain Kinsella offered that hunting allowance on open space land is important to serve the needs of all citizens of the town, and should not be restricted based on potential GLT donors' prejudice again hunting. Commission members agreed that Land Trust application for State of CT grant money and subsequent stewardship by GLT, as well as potential monetary savings make it a best scenario. Anders Nygren reiterated that the GCC would like to promote use of Title 67 funds to assist the GLT in acquiring the land, not purchasing it in the Town's name, if possible.

Anders Nygren will approach Chairman of Board of Finance and Goshen Town Attorney for their general feelings on this issue. He will report back to the Commission at the October meeting, at which time the members can debate the best course of action moving forward.

Anders Nygren mentioned that the submissions were made from GCC for the Goshen Town Topics newsletter due out in September (invasive plant article, historical talk and walk, GCC new member introductions), building energy audits have been done at town buildings.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Next Town Topics newsletter submissions (Spring, Summer)
- New indoor/winter projects for the Commission to pursue
- Old Goshen Historical Tour October 29 plans
- Fall announcement of East St. North trail opening

There was no other business to come before the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Chris Marino, seconded by Gene Newell; meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

GOSHEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION



Paul Gallo
Secretary

Received Sept. 29, 2016 2:28 PM.
Attest Bueben Z Buon
Goshen Town Clerk